

# Frequently Asked Questions

(Uniformed Service Members)

**INTRODUCTION:** The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* covers the voting rights of members of the Uniformed Services (on active duty), members of the Merchant Marine, their eligible family members, and citizens residing outside the United States. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) carries out the responsibilities of the Act by informing and educating U.S. citizens worldwide of their right to vote, fostering voting participation, and protecting and enhancing the electoral process at the Federal, State and local levels. The procedures and deadlines to vote absentee vary from state to state.

**Am I a UOCAVA Voter?** UOCAVA voters are all members of the Uniformed Services, their family members and members of the Merchant Marine and their family members, and U.S. citizens 18 years or older who reside outside the United States.

**In What Elections May I Vote?** Generally, all U.S. citizens 18 years or older who are or will be residing outside the United States during an election period are eligible to vote absentee in any election for Federal office. In addition, all members of the Uniformed Services, their family members and members of the Merchant Marine and their family members, who are U.S. citizens, may vote absentee in Federal, state and local elections.

**How do I register to vote, or apply for an absentee ballot?** The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) is accepted by all states and territories as an application for registration and for absentee ballot. The FPCA is postage-paid in the U.S. mail, including the Military Postal System, and State Department Pouch mail. An online version of the FPCA is available at the FVAP website, [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). The online form must be completed, printed, signed, dated and mailed to your Local Election Official. The online form must be mailed in an envelope with proper postage, or using our prepaid return envelope. All States and Territories except American Samoa and Guam accept the OFPCA. You may also send a written request for a ballot to your county, city, town or parish clerk.

**I would like to vote but don't know how. Where can I find assistance?** Information on applying for absentee registration and a ballot is available in the [Voting Assistance Guide](#). Voting Assistance Officers assigned to units at military installations and at each U.S. embassy or consulate have a copy of the Guide to assist you in completing the FPCA. U.S. citizen organizations overseas and many corporate offices of U.S. companies also have copies of the Guide available. The Guide is also available at the FVAP website, [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

**Do I have to be registered to vote absentee?** Registration requirements vary from state to state. States and territories allow voters to register and request an absentee ballot by submitting a single FPCA during the election year.

**How do I complete the FPCA? Where do I send my FPCA?** [Chapter 3](#) of the *Guide* outlines absentee voting procedures for each state and territory. Complete the FPCA according to the requirements for your state or territory of legal voting residence. In section IV under the heading of "Where to Send It" you will find a list of addresses for county and local election officials.

**Must I submit a separate application for each election?** One FPCA will allow you to receive all ballots for Federal offices for an entire calendar year. The *Help America Vote Act of October 2002* has extended the effective period of the FPCA through two regularly scheduled general elections for federal office. However, due to the transient nature of many UOCAVA citizens, FVAP recommends that each voter submit an FPCA to their state of legal residence in January of each year and again each time there is a change in the voters' mailing address.

**If I am required to have my FPCA or ballot notarized, how do I do it?** Generally, election materials may be required to be witnessed or sworn to before a notary, U.S. Commissioned Officer, embassy or consular officer, or other officials authorized to administer oaths. Most states and territories do not require notarization of the FPCA or ballot; therefore, consult [Chapter 3](#) of the *Guide* to determine your state or territory's requirements. In all instances you must sign and date the FPCA.

**When is the best time to apply for an absentee ballot?** Generally, the FPCA used only to request a ballot should be received by election officials at least forty-five days before election day to allow ample time to process the request and mail the ballot. FVAP recommends submitting an FPCA in January of each year. Consult [Chapter 3](#) of the *Guide* for further information on state or territorial registration deadlines.

**When should I receive my ballot?** Under normal circumstances, most states and territories begin mailing ballots to citizens 30-45 days before an election. If you have not received your ballot two weeks before the election, contact FVAP's Ombudsman Service. They will assist you in determining the status of your ballot. Always execute and return your absentee ballot regardless of when you receive it. Court decisions sometimes require the counting of ballots voted by Election Day, but received by the Local Election Official for a certain period of time following Election Day.

**What is an election for Federal office?** An election for Federal office is any general, special, runoff or primary election held solely or in part for the purpose of selecting, nominating, or electing any candidate for the office of President, Vice President, Presidential elector, Member of the United States Senate, Member of the United States House of Representatives, Delegates from the District of Columbia, Guam, Virgin Islands, and American Samoa, and Resident Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

**What is the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)?** UOCAVA voters may be able to use a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) available through Voting Assistance Officers at military installations or at U.S. embassies/consulates. Generally, an absent uniformed services member or citizen outside the United States can only use the FWAB under very specific conditions.

**THE ABSENT UNIFORMED SERVICES VOTER MUST:** 1. Be absent from his/her voting residence; 2. Have applied for a regular ballot early enough so the request is received by the appropriate local election official not later than the State deadline; or the date that is 30 days before the general election; **AND** 3. Have not received the requested regular absentee ballot from the state.

**THE CITIZEN OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES MUST:** 1. Be located outside the United States (including APO/FPO addresses); 2. Have applied for a regular ballot early enough so the request is received by the appropriate local election official not later than the State deadline; or the date that is 30 days before the general election; **AND** 3. Have not received the requested regular absentee ballot from the state.

An online version of the FWAB is available at the FVAP website, [www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefwab.html](http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefwab.html). The online version must be completed, printed, signed, dated, and mailed to your Local Election Official. The online form must be mailed in an envelope with proper postage, or using our prepaid [return envelope](#). Refer to [Chapter 3](#) of the *Guide* to determine your state or territory's witness or notary requirements for voted ballots. Return the voted FWAB to the local election official to meet the state or territorial deadline for counting. Additionally, eleven states have expanded the use of the FWAB: Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Refer to Chapter 3 of the Guide for details.

**Where would I obtain information on issues, positions and candidates?** In addition to reading U.S. news magazines and newspapers, both Democrats Abroad and Republicans Abroad maintain overseas offices and have information about the candidates and issues. Alternatively, the party organizations can be contacted as follows:

Democrats Abroad	Republicans Abroad International
430 South Capitol Street, S.E.	1275 K Street, NW, Suite 102
Washington, DC 20003	Washington, D.C. 20005
Phone: (202) 863-8103	Phone: (202) 608-1423
Fax: (202) 863-8063	Fax: (202) 608-1431
World Wide Web: <a href="http://www.democratsabroad.org">www.democratsabroad.org</a>	World Wide Web: <a href="http://www.republicansabroad.org">www.republicansabroad.org</a> or <a href="http://www.republicansabroad.com">www.republicansabroad.com</a>
Email: <a href="mailto:info@democratsabroad.org">info@democratsabroad.org</a>	General Information Email: <a href="mailto:chairman@republicansabroad.org">chairman@republicansabroad.org</a>

Information about candidates, issues, and local news are available on the internet. Armed Forces Radio and Television Service broadcasts American news and entertainment programs throughout the world. Alternatively, subscribe to hometown newspapers, or contact friends and relatives for information on state and local issues.

**Where is my "legal voting residence?"** For voting purposes, your "legal voting residence" can be the state or territory where you last resided prior to entering military service or the state or territory that you have since claimed as your legal residence. Even though you may no longer maintain formal ties to that residence, the address determines your proper district, ward, precinct or parish for voting purposes. To claim a new legal residence you must have simultaneous physical presence and the intent to return to that location as your primary residence. Military and family members may change their legal residence every time they change permanent duty stations or they may retain their legal residence without change. Family members may have a different legal voting residence from the member. A JAG officer or legal counsel should be consulted before legal residence is changed because there are usually other factors that should be considered besides voting.

**Can I vote in person where I am stationed?** Military members may vote in the state or territory where stationed if they change their legal residence to that state or territory, even if they live on a military installation. Be advised that there are legal obligations that may be incurred, such as taxation, if you change your state or territory of residence. Therefore, consult a JAG officer or legal counsel before making such a decision. At the present time, there are no provisions for personnel stationed outside the United States to vote, in person, where stationed.

**My family members are not in the military; can they also vote absentee?** The law entitles eligible family members of military personnel to vote absentee. Family members are considered to be in the same category of absentee voter as military members and generally should follow the same procedures.

Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program	Commercial: (703)-588-1584, DSN (military): 425-1584
Department of Defense	Fax: (703) 696-1352, DSN: 426-1352
1155 Defense Pentagon	Toll-free (U.S., Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands):
Washington, DC 20301-1155	1-800-438-VOTE (8683)
FVAP website: <a href="http://www.fvap.gov">www.fvap.gov</a>	International toll free <a href="#">phone</a> and <a href="#">fax</a> numbers are available.
Email: <a href="mailto:vote@fvap.ncr.gov">vote@fvap.ncr.gov</a>	

**Your Local Voting Assistance Officer Is:**

<b>Location:</b>	<b>Fax:</b>
<b>Phone:</b>	<b>E-mail:</b>